factor. After the new GSP Scheme of EU, Indian bicycles attract 12.7% duty in the EU.

(c) Yes, a representation has been received from the Federation of Engineering Exports Organisation and En-gineecring Export Promotion Council against the drawback notification No. 39/ 97 datd 10.9.97.

(d) A corrigendum has since been issued on 17.11.97 increasing the capping rates on five items of bicycle spare parts.

Trade between India and erstwhile Soviet Union and CIS countries

661. SHRI K.M. SAIFULLAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the value of trade between India and the erstwhile Soviet Union before its disintegration;

(b) the value of trade between India and the countries of erstwhile Soviet Union during 1996-97;

(c) the main items in which the decline in trade has occurred; and

(d) the steps taken to increase trade between India and these countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) The value of trade between India and the erstwhile Soviet Union during 1990-91 was Rs. 7803 crores.

(b) The value of trade between India and CIS and Baltic countries during 1996-97 was Rs. 5829 crores.

(c) The main items in which the decline in trade has occurred include tea, coffee, cashew, cosmetics and toiletries, chemicals, pulp and waste paper cotton raw and waste, fertilizers manufactured, iron and steel, etc.

(d) The government has initiated several measures for boosting Indo-CIS trade. These measures include regular review of trade between India and the countries of this region through meetings of Joint Commission, Working Groups and Joint business councils, encouraging consignment sales and opening of warehouses, broad-basing the basket of tradable goods, signing of agreements, opening of Indian Banks, participation in trade fairs and exhibitions and exchange of delegations.

Removal of quantitative restrictions on import of Consumers Goods

662. PROF. NAUNIHAL SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Govern ment are moving towards removal of quantitative restrictions (QRS) on im ports of consumer goods; and

(b) whether Government arc aware that the move has shaken up the domes tic manufacturers of consumer goods as the lifting of QRS will have a tremendous adverse impact on it; if so, what steps have been taken up by Government to re-establish the confidence of domestic industry; the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH)A (a) to (b) Article XI of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 1994 provides that no prohibitions or restrictions other than duties, taxes or charges, whether made effective through quotas, import or export licences or other measures shall be maintained by any Member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). However, under the exceptional provisions of Article XVIII of the GATT, India has some residual quantitative restrictions on imports maintained for balance of payments purposes. In May, 1997, Iqdia. has presented to, the WTO a plan for the elimination of these restrictions on imports, including those on consumer goods. This plan was considered at the consultations with India of the WTO Committee on Balance of Payments Restrictions in June-July, 1997, when noting' the divergence of opinion

among WTO Members on, inter alia, the length of the plan, it was agreed to conclude the consultations.

Subsequently, Australia, Canada, the European Communities, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United States of America, requested consultations with India under Article XXII of the GATT 1994 and the Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes. Pursuant to these consultations agreement has been reached with Canada, the EC and Switzerland in respect of the time-scheeules for the elimination of these quantitative restrictions on imports. Negotiations towards a mutually satisfactory solution with Australia and New Zealand are in an advanced stage. At the request of the USA, a panel has been constituted on 18 November, 1997 to examine the US allegation that the continued maintenance of quantitative restrictions on import by India is inconsistent with India's obligations under the WTO Agreement.

These restrictions are proposed to be eliminated in a phased manner so that the interests of the domestic industry are protected. Simultaneously, efforts are being made to improve productivity of Indian industry and to enhance overall competitiveness. Safeguard measures to protect domestic production, such as protection through tariffs, anti-dumping measures, countervailing measures to offset the effect of unjastifiable subsidies and safeguard measures to prevent damage to domestic production through surge in imports, are proposed to be utilised effectively.

Review of performance o f Export Promotion Councils

663. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) various export promotion councils presently operating in the country for export promotion of commodities and functions of such councils;

(b) whether performance of these ex port promotion councils has been critical ly reviewed recently for the last three years;

(c) if so, details of the performance council-wise in terms of set norms of assessment;

(d) details of fresh initiative taken/ proposed during 1997-98 for restructuring the functioning of various export promotion councils strengthening the network to cater to the interests of exporters more effectively; and

(e) details of proposals received from Government of Maharashtra in this regard and action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) A total of 20 Export Promotion Councils (EPCs) arc there, out of which 11 councils came under the purview of Ministry of Commerce and the remaining 9 fall under the purview of Ministry of Textiles. A list of all these EPCs is enclosed as Statcment-I. *(See* below) Their main function is to promote and develop the Exports of the Country. These functions are reflected in Statement-II. *(See* below).

(b) and (c) The performance of these councils is reviewed on a regular basis and wherever necessary the required remedial action is taken.

(d) No specific decision has been taken for restructuring the functions of various Export Promotion Councils. However, ef forts are made from time to time to further strengthen these Councils so as to cater to the needs of the exporting com munity in an effective manner.

(e) Since no general restructuring of Export Promotion Councils is considered to be necessary, no such proposal is receiving attention of the Government.